

New Zealand from Above (Episode 2)

Central South Island

In coproduction with Making Movies (New Zealand), Bearcage (Australia) and ZDF/ARTE

In the second episode we travel into a landscape formed by glaciers. The central south, stretching towards Antarctica is diverse: fare plains, high mountain peaks, icy glaciers, a great number of melting water lakes, the Southern Lakes, and surprisingly high wine growing areas in Otago. In the early days gold diggers came in the hope to make big money, today wealth is made with Pinot Noir in Otago, wine makers earn respect for worldwide.

Mountains piling up, wild and dramatic coastlines, ruins of the gold digger city Bendigo, crystal-clear lakes fed by the water of the melting glaciers of high mountain tops: The region in the central south of the South Island is among the most beautiful and diverse landscapes of New Zealand. Visitors are enchanted by this breathtaking scenery from open grass plaines to the high mountain range. It's here where the country's highest peak can be found, Mount Cook, with 3754 meters. Snow-covered glaciers have formed the surrounding landscape, the pressure of ice and boulders created deep fiords that are now filled with cold, clear water. The water is used for salmon breeding. Dams were built in some lakes to generate power, 70% of New Zealand's energy need is covered with renewable sources. The country was one of the pioneers in the use of green energy.

The national park Aoraki/Mount Cook does not only host the highest and longest glaciers of New Zealand, but also 19 peaks over 3.000 meters. In Maori the Mount Cook is called Aoraki, what means "peaking out of the clouds". A sea of clouds surrounds the icy tops, the panorama is majestic and beautiful.

Our next stop is the district of Otago located north-east of the so called Southern Lakes, a dry, hot and dusty region. In the 1860s this area was the center of the gold rush. Thousands of gold seekers arrived by ship at the small Port Chalmers. In the nearby town, Dunedin, the Dunstan-Trail starts, leading through endless barren plains to the little gold city Bendigo. Today the trail is a popular hiking and biking route, Bendigo itself is abandoned. Only ruins are left, relicts of the golden past. Some regard wine as New Zealand's gold of today, like winemaker Nick Mills. Pinot Noir is grown in the most southernly wine-area in the world and has gained international fame. The ships which arrived during the gold rush packed with gold diggers, nowadays leave the port in the other direction full with tasty wine.